



Natural Resources Conservation Service
6013 Lakeside Blvd.
Indianapolis, IN 46278

February 6, 2008

INDIANA BULLETIN NO. IN 300-8-12

SUBJECT: LTP – Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) for 2008

Purpose: To establish the process and actions necessary to obligate the FY08 WHIP allocations in Indiana, rollout the FY08 WHIP program, and release the 2008 WHIP Guidance Document.

Expiration Date: September 30, 2008

Action Required By: March 14, 2008

Indiana NRCS has received an allocation for the WHIP for FY 2008. These funds will only be available until March 14, 2008. In order to meet this timeframe, field staff need to focus efforts to identify qualified applicants and get unfunded projects in Protracts deferred to 08 or cancelled.

If starting new applications, the basic information on **all** applicants will be entered in ProTracts and the NRCS-CPA-1200 will be generated for the applicants' signature. Deferred applications should transfer this information already submitted in protracts but you will have to recheck all eligibility for 2008. All interested persons have the right to sign an NRCS-CPA-1200 application. Review the 1202 appendix with the applicant and provide them with a copy.

Applicants must provide the following information to meet basic WHIP eligibility requirements:

- Evidence of signatory authority when an entity is involved
- Evidence of control of the land for the contract period
- Farm and Tract number

Once the application is entered in ProTracts select the applicant information menu item to check eligibility. Run the "Update eligibility" feature to see if updates to AGI, HEL/WC, and payment limitations are applied to this application. Determine if the applicant and land meet the basic WHIP program eligibility requirements.

For eligible applicants, proceed with scheduling a field visit with the producer and prepare the conservation plan if not already done. A field visit and conservation plan is **required** to be completed before ranking the application. If the applicant is ineligible, **STOP ANY FURTHER WORK** on the application until all eligibility issues are resolved. If eligibility appears to be affected by FSA resetting the eligibility flags, then work with FSA to get current information entered. If the applicant is ineligible because necessary paperwork has not been filed with FSA, then determine specifically what the eligibility issue is and generate the "Program Eligibility Certification Letter" from ProTracts.

DIST: 0

Provide the “Program Eligibility Certification Letter” from ProTracts in person to the applicant or mail it Certified-Return Receipt. This letter explains what eligibility element(s) the producer does not meet and what needs to be done. It is the applicants’ responsibility to provide the required information within 30 days of the letter. Unfortunately, this will be too late to get them these funds; therefore, it is recommended to hand deliver the letter to see if they can get FSA to correct the problems immediately.

Upload the conservation plan from Toolkit to ProTracts and rank eligible applications using the Application Evaluation and Ranking Tool in ProTracts. When the plan and ranking are complete, advise the Area Conservationist, or designee, that the application is ready for Quality Assurance (QA). When the Quality Assurance is completed, the reviewer will change the application status to “Preapproved” in ProTracts. The Programs staff will change the status of applications selected for funding to “Approved” and notify District Conservationists. Once they are “Approved”, applications, rankings, plans and contracts cannot be edited. If edits are necessary the application will have to be moved to pending and will be eligible for consideration in the next round of funding, if one is available. Contact the Programs staff to reset an application to pending.

District Conservationists will print out the “Approved” NRCS-CPA-1202 with the Programs staff electronic signature and have the applicant(s) sign it and the NRCS-CPA-1202 appendix. The applicant and DC will also need to sign the NRCS-CPA-1155 and the Ranking Report from AERT. When all of the above documents are signed, enter the date the applicant signed the contract (NRCS CPA 1202) on the vendor screen in ProTracts. This will automatically check the signed box in Protracts.

Scan the signed 1202 signature page and include it in an e-mail notifying the Area Conservationist, or designee, that the contract is ready for NRCS obligating signature. Once NRCS signs the contract it is officially a contract and subject to cancellation/termination and cost recovery policy.

The 2008 Indiana WHIP Guidance Document is attached. Some highlights are listed below:

- The **minimum** total cost-share requirement for an application to be considered will remain at \$1,000. The **maximum** amount allowed is \$50,000 per applicant.
- Financial assistance (FA) funds will be divided into three groups. Seventy five percent of the total state allocation will go to private landowners and government and Not-for-Profit (NFP) groups. These funds will be further divided with seventy five percent being set aside for private landowners and the remaining twenty five percent for government and NFP. The remaining 25 percent will be set aside for treatment of invasive species.
- WHIP will no longer use the average cost (AM) cost type. Compensation will be based on a payment schedule developed from historical data collected over the past year through the EQIP and WHIP programs.
- Other invasive species will be eligible for cost-share in addition to kudzu under the Pest Management (595) standard of the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG). These are listed in the attached 2008 WHIP Guidance Document.

All 2007 WHIP applications that are currently in ProTracts need to be cancelled or deferred. If the applicant wishes to apply in 2008, the application should be deferred in ProTracts and promoted to 2008. If the applicant does not wish to reapply for the WHIP program, the application should be cancelled.

The selection date for funding will be March 3, 2008. All pre-approved (QA completed at area level) applications in ProTracts by that date will be considered for funding. This will allow two weeks to get contracts finalized and signed to obligate funds. All funds MUST be obligated by March 14, 2008.

Any questions regarding the ranking process or guidance document should be directed to MaryJo Woodruff, Programs, at extension 311.

/s/

JANE E. HARDISTY
State Conservationist

Enclosure